



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

February 26, 2026

MIR-26-05

Contact of Tanker *Platanos* with Martinez Refining Company Wharf Pier

On October 14, 2024, about 0412 local time, the crude oil tanker *Platanos* was undocking from the Martinez Refining Company Wharf Pier, near Martinez, California, in the Carquinez Strait, when the vessel's port quarter made contact with a concrete dolphin and a fender support panel of the pier (see figure 1 and figure 2).¹ There were no injuries, and no pollution was reported. Damage to the vessel and pier was estimated at \$500,229.



Figure 1. *Platanos* underway at an undetermined date. (Source: Samos Steamship Co.)

¹ (a) In this report, all times are Pacific daylight time, and all miles are nautical miles (1.15 statute miles). (b) Visit [nts.gov](https://www.nts.gov) to find additional information in the [public docket](#) for this NTSB investigation (case no. DCA25FM001). Use the [CAROL Query](#) to search investigations.

Casualty Summary

Casualty type	Contact
Location	Carquinez Strait, Martinez, California 38°01.94' N, 122°07.80' W
Date	October 14, 2024
Time	0412 Pacific daylight time (coordinated universal time -7 hrs)
Persons on board	23 (22 crewmembers and 1 pilot)
Injuries	None
Property damage	\$500,229 est.
Environmental damage	None
Weather	Visibility 15 nm, winds south 5 kts, air temperature 57°F, morning twilight 0605, sunrise 0702
Waterway information	Strait; width 3,000 ft, depth 50 ft, current 1.9 kts (ebb)

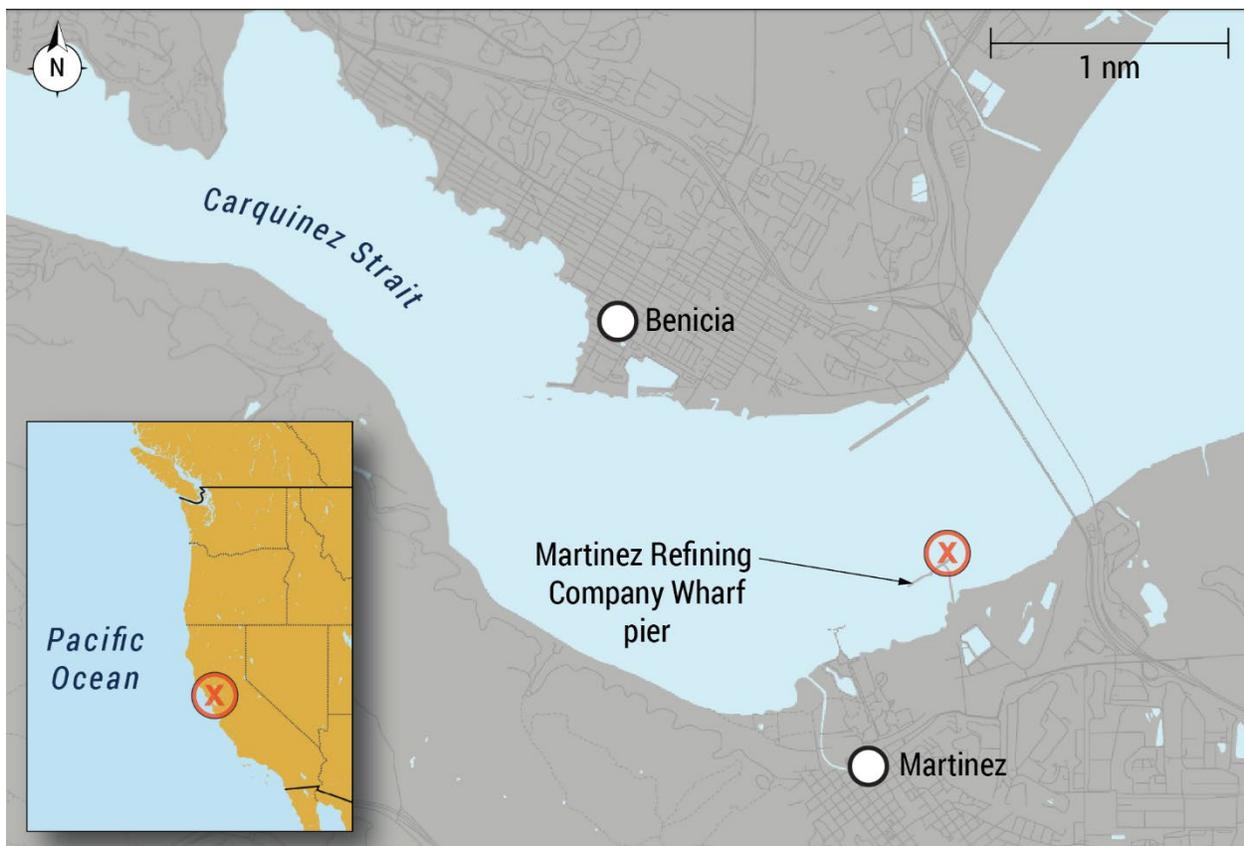


Figure 2. Area where the *Platanos* contacted the Martinez Refining Company Wharf pier, as indicated by a circled X. (Background source: Google Maps)

1 Factual Information

1.1 Event Sequence

On the morning of October 14, 2024, the 818-foot-long tanker *Platanos* was moored port side to the Martinez Refining Company Wharf pier, berth no. 1. The crew had completed cargo discharge operations and was planning to shift the vessel, in ballast, to outer anchorage no. 9 (located about 30 miles away, immediately south of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge). The *Platanos* had a single rudder and a fixed-pitch, right-hand-turning propeller directly driven by a 15,730-hp, slow-speed diesel main engine.

At 0334, after boarding the *Platanos*, a San Francisco Bar pilot entered the bridge, where he met the master.² The pilot had 32 years of experience as a San Francisco Bar pilot and told investigators he had piloted vessels to and from the Martinez Refining Company Wharf pier more times than he could remember.

The master told the pilot that everything was tested, and the steering and propulsion control, navigation, and communication systems were in good order. At 0348, the master and pilot began a master/pilot exchange, during which they discussed the ship's handling characteristics and the intended maneuver to get underway from the pier, including the placement and use of the tugs.³ For the maneuver, which did not require the ship to turn around, they planned to use two tugs: one with a line forward near the bow and one with a line aft. The pilot expected the ebb current to be running at 1.9 knots (flowing stern to bow). Given this strong current, he planned to concurrently have the forward tug pull the bow and the aft tug pull the stern of the *Platanos* off the pier, with the aft tug pulling faster than the forward tug. Once the tugs had pulled the *Platanos* far enough off the pier to where

² A *pilot* is retained by the ship to provide local knowledge of the waterway, familiarity with tides and currents in the area, understanding of local procedures, and a thorough knowledge of the topography of the waterway. Under state and federal regulations, pilots are generally required for vessels engaged in international trade that are transiting the navigable waters of the United States. Pilots usually operate by issuing maneuvering instructions (such as heading, rudder angle, and speed orders) to the crew under the supervision of the master or the officer in charge of the navigation watch, or both.

³ A *master/pilot exchange* is required at the start of pilot transits and includes discussion of the vessel's navigational equipment, any limitations of maneuverability, available engine speeds, berthing maneuvers, intended course and speed through the waterway, anticipated hazards along the route, weather conditions, composition of the bridge team and deck crew both forward and aft including bow lookout, and so on.

the ship could get underway, he planned to release the tugs. The pilot told investigators that the winds were light at the time of departure.

At 0350, two tugs arrived alongside the *Platanos*: the *Delta Cathryn* and the *Delta Deanna*, both 6,700-hp tractor tugs. The pilot told investigators that he had worked with both tugs numerous times in the past and that they were regulars in the area. The pilot used his portable radio to direct the *Delta Deanna* to make a line fast at the starboard side forward, and the *Delta Cathryn* to make a line fast at the starboard side aft (just forward of the starboard bridge wing). At 0355, the master instructed the crew to secure the tugs to the appropriate bollards.

At 0357, the *Delta Deanna* was secured forward, and a minute later, the *Delta Cathryn* was secured aft. In his notebook and on the mooring plan diagram of the master/pilot exchange form, the pilot wrote down the placement and names of each tug on the starboard side of the ship. As was his common practice, he also wrote down the names and placement of each tug on a "radio card," or reference card, which he would have with him for quick reference from the bridge wing of the ship. At 0400, from the portside bridge wing, the pilot directed both tugs to push on the starboard side of the ship to hold it against the pier while the master ordered the *Platanos*'s mooring lines let go forward and aft (see figure 3).

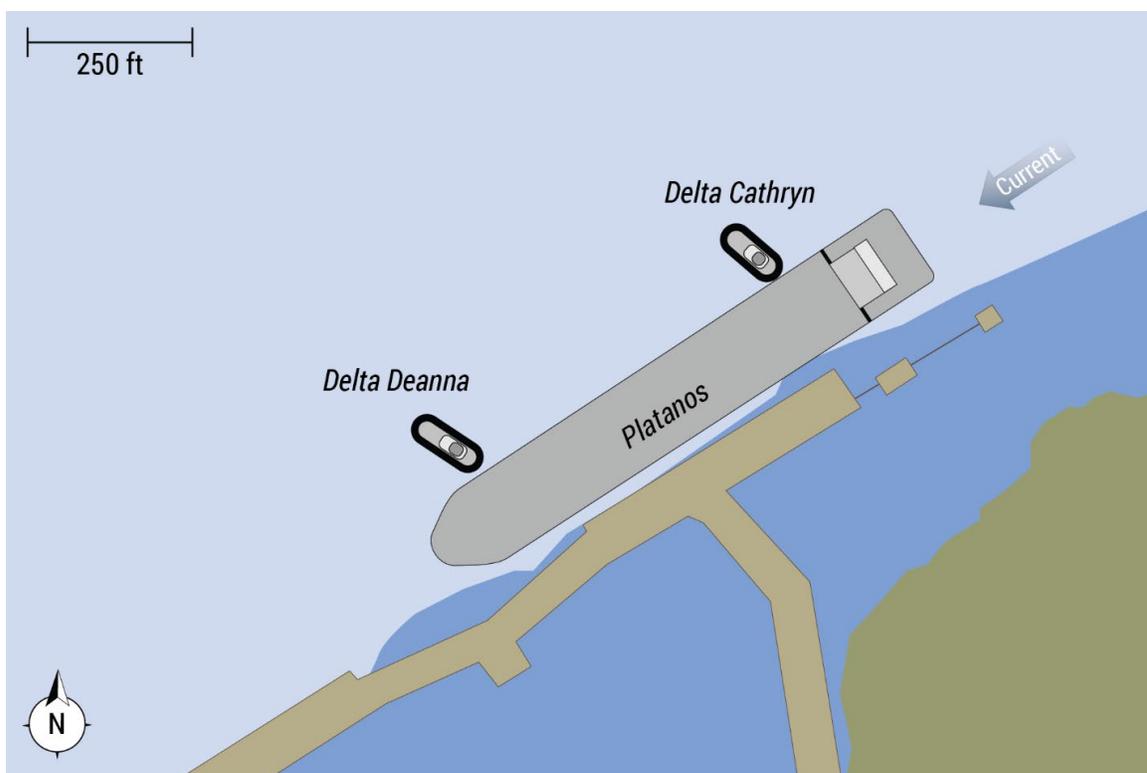


Figure 3. Tug positions at 0400 for the undocking. (Scale approximate.) (Background source: *Platanos* electronic chart display and information system)

At 0409, all mooring lines were on deck, and the pilot ordered the *Delta Deanna* to pull dead slow away, followed by half away, and, at 0410, "three-quarters away" (meaning pull at 75% power away from the pier). He ordered the *Delta Cathryn* to pull "minimum away" (meaning to pull at minimum power away from the pier). About the same time, in anticipation of the ebb current, the pilot ordered the *Platanos's* main propulsion to dead slow astern, and the junior officer manning the propulsion control lever responded appropriately.

At 0411, the pilot then ordered the *Delta Cathryn* to stop, and seconds later, the pilot radioed the *Delta Deanna* and asked the operator to be on a 90° angle to the *Platanos* with the tug line. The *Delta Deanna* operator responded that he was "pretty darn close" (see figure 4). The pilot replied, "You are at a 45 [degrees] and you should be forward of the line." (The captain of the *Delta Deanna* later said in a statement that he believed the pilot was looking at the *Delta Cathryn*, which was sitting idle on the quarter, holding position 45° away forward with a slack line). Seconds afterward, the master announced to the pilot that the "aft is too close" (meaning the stern of the ship was too close to the pier). The pilot ordered the main propulsion of the *Platanos* stopped.

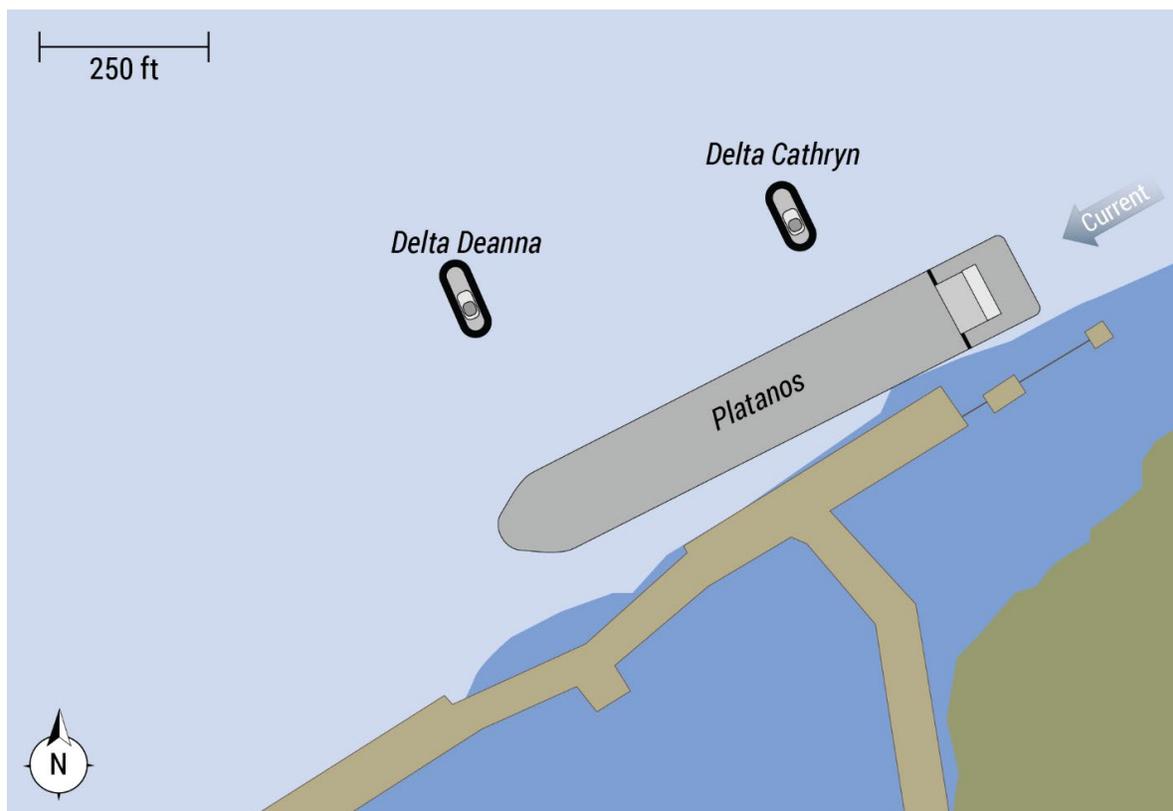


Figure 4. Tug positions at 0411:13. (Scale approximate.) (Background source: *Platanos* electronic chart display and information system)

At 0411:23, the pilot ordered the *Delta Deanna* to pull “full away” and ordered the rudder hard to port. Seconds later, at 0411:50, based on the *Platanos*’s voyage data recorder data, an impact sound could be heard as the vessel contacted the northeastern corner of the pier (see figure 5).

At 0412, the pilot asked the master if the rudder was hard to port, which the master confirmed. The pilot then ordered the *Platanos*’s propulsion to dead slow ahead and asked the *Delta Cathryn* if the tug was stopped. The tug operator confirmed he was. The master asked the pilot, “What is going on?” The pilot replied, “Let’s get out of here.” The pilot said that he initially thought the ship could get underway because he did not feel any contact. However, when he looked up, he saw peripherally that the *Delta Deanna* was pulling at the starboard bow, and the *Delta Cathryn* appeared to be stopped near the starboard quarter. The pilot believed he had ordered the tug at the starboard bow to stop and the tug at the starboard quarter to pull. He told investigators that at this point, he noticed that there appeared to be a miscommunication with the tugboats.

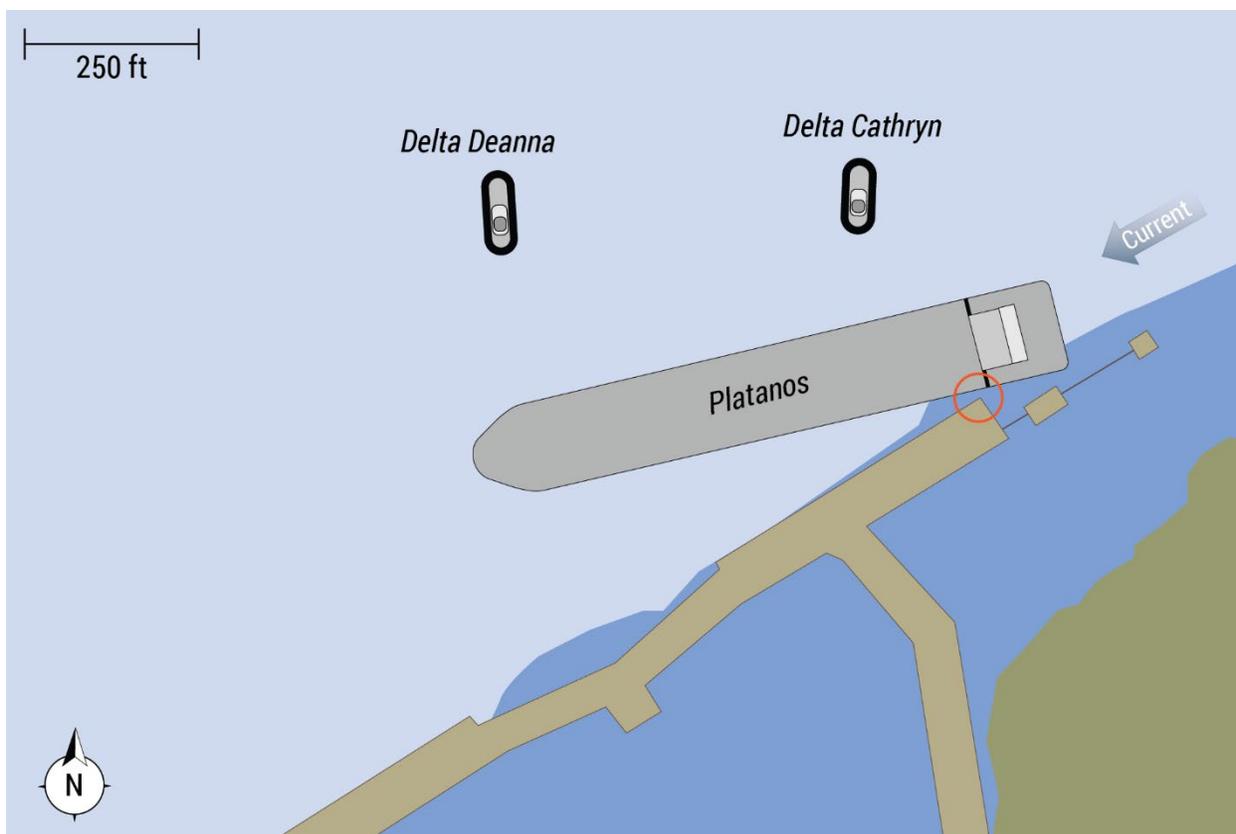


Figure 5. Tug positions at 0411:54, with location of contact circled (Scale approximate). (Background source: *Platanos* electronic chart display and information system)

Once the *Platanos* was a safe distance from the pier, the pilot ordered the lines of the *Delta Catherine* and *Delta Deanna* let go. Both were let go at 0418, and just afterward, the pilot asked the operator of the *Delta Cathryn* to proceed to the port quarter of the *Platanos* to see if there was any damage. The captains of both tugs stated that the pilot told them over the radio that he may have gotten the tugs mixed up.

At 0421, the operator of the *Delta Catherine* told the pilot that there was a “small puncture” about 4 feet above the waterline, port side aft, and that there were no signs of leakages. The pilot ordered the ship’s main propulsion to full ahead and issued steering orders to proceed onward to the destination anchorage. The pilot notified the US Coast Guard and his office of the damage.

The contact resulted in a penetration of the shell plating into a pump room void space of the *Platanos*’s hull, port side. There were numerous horizontal indentations, buckling, and cracks of the shell plating extending aft of the hull penetration at the same height (see figure 6). No damage below the waterline was found, and there was no flooding to any of the ship’s internal spaces. Repairs to the ship were estimated to cost \$390,229.

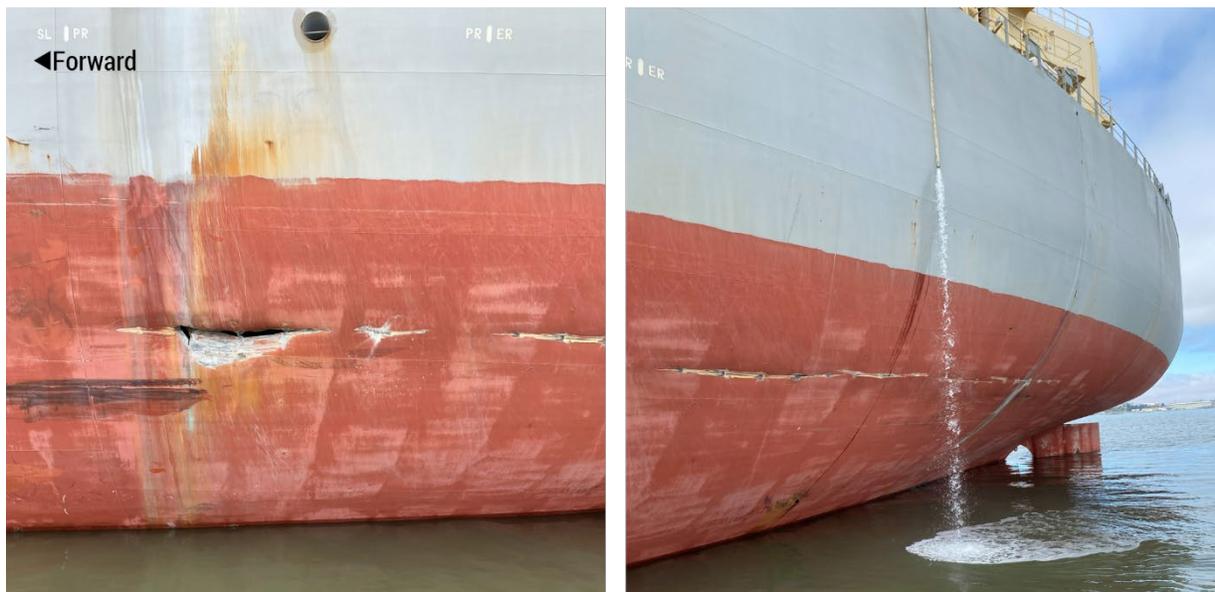


Figure 6. Left to right: Hull penetration to the *Platanos*, port side aft, on October 14, 2024. Indentation, buckling, and cracks on the *Platanos*, port side aft. (Background source: Coast Guard).

The Martinez Refining Company Wharf pier (berth no. 1) sustained impact damage—consisting of concrete spalling and cracks—to the northeastern face of the dolphin and fender support panel (see figure 7). Repairs to the berth were initially estimated to cost up to \$110,000.

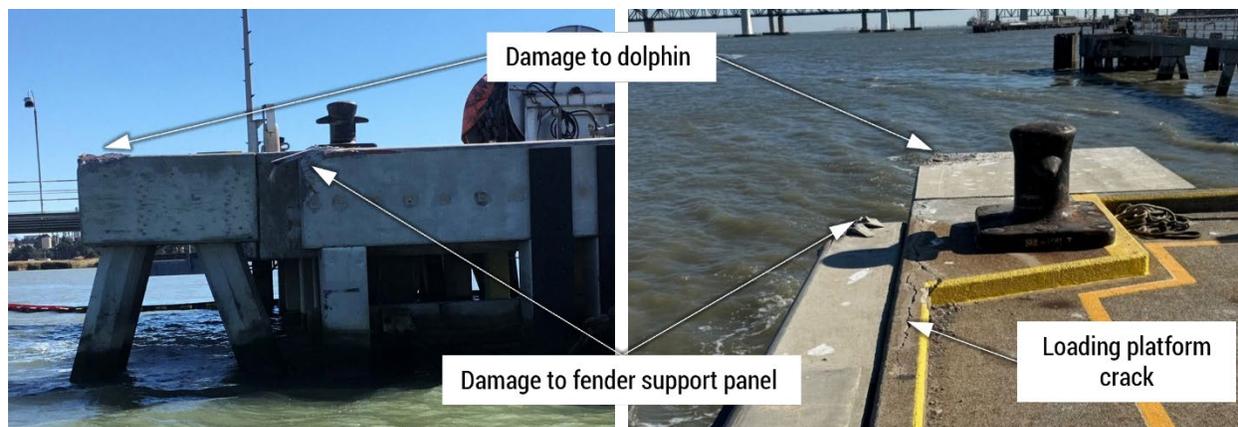


Figure 7. Left to right: Northeastern end of the Martinez Refining Wharf Pier berth no. 1 showing damage to the dolphin, fender support panel, and loading platform. Damage as viewed from the loading platform. (Background source: SGH)

The pilot told investigators that once the *Platanos* was away from the pier, he noticed that, on the reference card he had with him on the bridge wing, he had written that the *Delta Cathryn* was positioned on the starboard bow and the *Delta Deanna* was positioned on the starboard quarter. Based on information from the *Platanos*'s voyage data recorder and statements from the operators of both tugs, the *Delta Deanna* was positioned at the starboard bow, and the *Delta Cathryn* was at the starboard quarter.

The pilot stated that he felt rested at the time that he was on board the *Platanos*. The *Platanos* was his first vessel movement of the day, and he was not scheduled to pilot any other vessels afterward. He had not been assigned to pilot any vessel in the previous 24 hours. The pilot had been informed that he was assigned to the *Platanos* about 1800 on October 13, about 9.5 hours before he was scheduled to board the vessel (0330 on October 14). He told investigators he went to sleep about 2130 on October 13 and woke up about 0200 on October 14 (about 4.5 hours of sleep). On October 12, the previous night, the pilot went to sleep sometime after 2300 and awakened sometime after 0700 on October 13 (about 8 hours of sleep).

The pilot, master, and bridge team of the *Platanos* were tested for alcohol and other drugs, and all results were negative for tested substances.

2 Analysis

Early in the morning on October 14, 2024, while a pilot was undocking the in-ballast tanker *Platanos* with the use of two assist tugs, the port quarter of the ship struck the northeastern corner of the Martinez Refining Company Wharf pier shortly after getting underway, resulting in a hole in the ship above the waterline and damage to the pier.

There were no navigational, steering, propulsion or communication equipment defects or deficiencies with the *Platanos* or either of the tugs. Weather and visibility conditions at the time of the casualty were favorable, with the only reported challenge being the strong ebb current.

Conning the *Platanos* at the time of the maneuver from the pier was an experienced San Francisco Bar pilot. He told investigators that before beginning the maneuver from the port bridge wing of the *Platanos*, when he wrote down the names and positions of the two tugs on his reference card, he transposed the names. As such, orders intended for the tug at the starboard quarter were given to the tug on the starboard bow and vice versa. The result was the bow being rapidly pulled away from the pier, causing the stern of the ship to move toward the pier in a 1.9-knot quartering current, which set the ship toward the pier. This was contrary to the pilot's plan to pull the vessel's stern off the pier quicker than the bow.

Errors, such as slips and lapses, occur in the execution of routine or highly practiced tasks, and are often the result of an attentional shift, preoccupation, or distraction while performing the task. The pilot of the *Platanos* had a normal practice of writing down the names and positions of the tugboats that were assisting a vessel. However, on the morning of the contact, he transposed the names and positions of the tugs on his reference card. This resulted in the pilot having an incorrect mental model of the tugboat positions and the effect each would have on the *Platanos* as it maneuvered off the pier.

It is possible that the pilot was interrupted or became distracted by another task while writing down the positions of the tugboats leading to the error. An interruption or distraction, such as concurrent discussions with ship's crew, while marking each tugboat's position could have shifted the pilot's attention enough to cause the error. The pilot may have also been affected by fatigue. While the pilot reported getting 8 hours of sleep the night of October 12-13, his sleep immediately before the contact was limited to about 4.5 hours due to having to report on board at 0330 on October 14. The contact also occurred at 0412, during a recognized circadian low period (0300-0500), when an individual's desire for sleep is increased

and performance effects are more pronounced.⁴ If the pilot was experiencing the effects of acute fatigue, he could have suffered a lapse in attention.

One of the core fundamentals of bridge resource management is the ability for bridge team members to trap errors before they become an undesired occurrence. The master is ultimately responsible for the safety of the ship, which gives him the obligation to question and, if necessary, take over from the pilot in case he is in doubt of the pilot's judgment. During the maneuver, about 30 seconds before the contact, it became apparent to the master that the vessel's stern was too close to the pier, and he warned the pilot. The master was unaware that the pilot had transposed the tug positions and was issuing orders to each tug that were intended for the other. After the master warned the pilot, the pilot attempted to order measures to slow the stern's movement to the pier. However, his order to have the aft tug pull full went to the forward tug. Given the short duration of time between the master's warning and the contact, the lack of visual cues (in darkness), and the master's unawareness that the pilot had transposed the tug positions, there were no actions the master could have taken at that point to prevent the contact of the ship with the pier.

⁴ International Maritime Organization, "Guidelines on Fatigue," MSC. 1/Circ. 1598, January 2019, 15.

3 Conclusions

3.1 Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the contact of the tanker *Platanos* with the Martinez Refining Company Wharf pier was the pilot transposing the tug positions on his reference card and subsequently issuing orders to each tug that were intended for the other while maneuvering the tanker off a dock.

Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Platanos</i>
Type	Cargo, Liquid Bulk (Crude oil tanker)
Owner/Operator	Orama Shipmanagement Co./Samos Steamship Co. (Commercial)
Flag	The Bahamas
Port of registry	Nassau, The Bahamas
Year built	2019
Official number	7001266
IMO number	9825477
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Length (overall)	819.9 ft (249.9 m)
Breadth (max.)	144.4 ft (44.0 m)
Draft (casualty)	29.2 ft (8.9 m)
Tonnage	63,461 GT ITC
Engine power; manufacturer	1 × 15,730 hp (11,730 kW); Mitsui MAN B&W 6G60ME-C9.5 diesel engine

NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from **Coast Guard Sector San Francisco** throughout this investigation.

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For more detailed background information on this report, visit the [NTSB Case Analysis and Reporting Online \(CAROL\) website](#) and search for NTSB accident ID DCA25FM001. Recent publications are available in their entirety on the [NTSB website](#). Other information about available publications also may be obtained from the website or by contacting—

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